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Summer Safety – Lyme Disease Prevention & Tick Tips and Tricks

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Each summer, Marines, their families, and pets at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune face a common enemy – the tick! The hot, humid summer weather, abundance of forest and thick underbrush, coupled with a thriving wild deer population all contribute to the perfect environment for ticks to breed, feed, and thrive.

Yes, many frequently come into contact with ticks during outdoor activities in places where ticks reside looking for their next blood meal. The nature of realistic Marine Corps training at the ranges and training areas virtually assures that Marines will brush up against, lie upon, or

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walk through forested areas and fields where ticks are found. Likewise, off-duty activities, such as outdoor sports, camping, or even gardening can result in ticks finding their way onto your clothing and body.

Unfortunately, ticks are much more than just a biting nuisance. Depending on the species of tick, they can carry diseases such as Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Ehrlichiosis. Although these are potentially serious illnesses, these diseases can be prevented through awareness of the risk of tick bites and knowledge of how to prevent becoming the tick’s next meal.

First, everyone must remember that the ticks are found here at Camp Lejeune. A tick will wait for you to stroll near a bush, a blade of tall grass, weeds, or on a tree limb where they can quickly rub off or crawl onto you. Knowing this, approved insect and tick repellents for use on human skin should be applied to exposed body areas before venturing outdoors.

Secondly, if you are frequently in the habit of spending time outdoors where you may come into contact with vegetation, then purchasing pre-impregnated tick and mosquito repellent clothing, or spraying your clothing with a permethrin containing tick repellent spray, will be advantageous. The good news for Marines is that their issued MARPAT utility uniforms come pre-impregnated against ticks and mosquitoes, which will remain effective for well past 50 wash cycles.

Thirdly, you should closely inspect your entire body for ticks. Remember, some are very small and hard to see.

If you do find a tick or ticks on your body, an easy way to get rid of them is to use tape or a lint roller and trap them to the sticky side; then fold the tape over to ensure that they are secured inside. Never crush them since this could lead to exposure of their body fluids that may contain pathogens which carry disease.

If you find a tick already imbedded and feeding in the skin, please see your local medical provider. If a provider is unavailable, follow the steps below:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible.
2. Pull upward away from the skin with even pressure, thus ensuring an even amount of prolonged upward pressure to the tick, which will cause them to dislodge from the feeding site. Avoid jerking or twisting, which may cause the mouth parts to break off. If the mouth parts should break off, try and remove them with clean tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth parts, leave the area alone and let it heal on its own.
3. After tick removal, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, iodine, or soap and water.

The collected tick should be placed in a zip-lock bag and placed in the freezer. This will allow you to later present the tick to your medical provider for identification if you develop symptoms possibly from a tick-borne disease. Avoid “hometown” tick removal remedies, such as using heat or painting over it with finger nail polish and waiting for it to detach itself. Your goal is to remove the identified tick as quickly as possible.

Don’t forget to ensure your dogs and cats are treated monthly using a veterinary approved anti-tick and flea medication. Otherwise, they will bring ticks into your home and onto you, as well.

Finally, keep an eye on any areas of your body where you or your family members were bitten by a tick for unusual rashes, redness, or other abnormal signs. If you do observe anything

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unusual, please do not hesitate to seek professional medical attention from your provider. It is also not uncommon for people to be unaware they were bitten by a tick and to develop tick-borne diseases later. Again, seek prompt medical attention; the sooner tick-borne diseases can be detected and treated, the better.

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I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is greatest for everybody, greatest both for the body and the mind. 269024

